

# **Engaging Volunteers in Water Monitoring: Motivations, Outcomes and Impacts on Natural Resource Management and Policy**

**Kristine Stepenuck**

Extension Leader and Assistant Professor

Lake Champlain Sea Grant Extension  
and Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources

University of Vermont

81 Carrigan Drive #312F

Burlington, Vermont 05405

802-656-8504

*kris.stepenuck@uvm.edu*

For centuries, the public has engaged in scientific research, building our understanding of the natural world, and expanding the geographic area over which data are collected. In recent years, the field of citizen science has formalized and grown exponentially. The United States has been a leader in volunteer water monitoring, with about 1,700 programs engaging hundreds of thousands of volunteers to assess water resources in streams, lakes, beaches, wetlands and groundwater each year.

Understanding the drivers of such programs, volunteer motivations, and outcomes of these efforts for the participants, their communities, and the environment is critical. Such knowledge benefits newly forming programs, sponsoring agencies and organizations, and the participants themselves.

This presentation will share results of research that addressed such questions, including revealing seven traits of volunteer water monitoring programs that relate to their reported impacts on natural resource management or policy decisions.